
LESSON 2

SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES: ORGANIZATION AND PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

From the outset of U. S. deployment of the Persian Gulf, special operations forces infiltrated without being seen, performed dangerous missions in silence, and executed clandestine operations with superb precision....That's the way American special operations forces have operated since the American Revolution.

--Special Warfare Journal,

March 1992

Introduction

Purpose

This lesson introduces you to

- w The capabilities and limitations of special operations forces (SOF)
 - w Possible organization frameworks, roles, and missions of an SOF
 - w Necessary planning for proper employment of such forces
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Why Study SOF: Organization and Planning Consideration?

You, as a Marine officer, must know the capabilities, limitations, and planning considerations necessary for the proper employment of SOF. Employment considerations are essential to MAGTF leaders and planners.

Continued on next page

Introduction, Continued

Relationship to Other Instruction	<p>This lesson</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">wProvides a foundation for the incorporation of special operations forces into MAGTF, joint, and multinational operationswGives you the knowledge base necessary for you to complete the special operations case studies to be conducted during <i>Operations Other Than War (OOTW)</i> (8809)
Study Time	<p>This lesson, including the issues for consideration, requires about 4.5 hours of study.</p>

Educational Objectives

Capabilities and Limitations	Comprehend the capabilities and limitations of U. S. special operations forces. [JPME Area 1(a)]
Frameworks, Roles, and Missions	Explain the possible organizational frameworks, roles, and missions of a special operations component command within a unified command or under a JTF. [JPME Areas 1(b) and 1(c)]
Planning Considerations	Summarize the planning considerations of employing special operations forces in support of joint and multinational forces at the operational level of war. [JPME Area 3(a)]
JPME Areas/ Objectives/Hours (accounting data)	1/a/1.5 1/b/1.0 1/c/1.0 3/a/1.0

Discussion

SOF Organization

The capabilities, limitations, and planning considerations are essential to the conduct of MAGTF operations within a joint environment. At a minimum, the MAGTF will probably find itself operating adjacent to SOF in the Joint Operations Area. The MAGTF may also be required to support SOF or may determine that SOF support is required to support MAGTF operations. Therefore, SOF employment considerations are essential to MAGTF leaders and planners. Be sure you study and know the four component commands of the U.S. Special Operations Command:

wArmy Special Operations Command (USASOC)
wNaval Special Warfare Command (NAVSPECWARCOM)
wAir Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC)
wJoint Special Operations Command (JSOC)

Special Operations Forces (SOF)

U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF), in one form or another, have existed as long as the nation. Yet, traditionally, few military officers have fully appreciated the unique capabilities, inherent limitations, and planning considerations necessary for the proper employment of such forces. Today's military professional does not have the luxury of such oversight or unintended neglect.

SOP Contributions

Like every unit of the U. S. Military, Special Operations Forces exist to support and defend the Constitution. They accomplish this through active participation in peacetime activities that dampen or deter conflict. Special Operations Forces provide the National Command Authorities (NCA) with forces capable of spearheading decisive victory as part of a joint team anywhere in the world and under virtually any conditions. Be sure you study and know the three levels which the military operations are conceived and executed.

wStrategical
wOperational
wTactical

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Discussion, Continued

Cohen-Nunn Amendment

The Cohen-Nunn Amendment created the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) in 1987. Its goal was to provide highly trained, rapidly deployable, and regionally focused SOF in support of global requirements from the National Command Authorities (NCA), the Geographic CINCs, and our American ambassadors and their country teams.

USSOCOM Task

USSOCOM tasks include

- wManaging a separate program and budget for SOF unique requirements
 - wConducting research, development, and acquisition of SOF-peculiar items
 - wDeveloping joint SOF doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures
 - wConducting joint SOF-specialized courses of instruction
 - wTraining all assigned forces and ensure their joint interoperability
 - wMonitoring the readiness of all assigned and forward-deployed joint SOF
 - wMonitoring the professional development of SOF personnel of all the services
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SOF Recent Employment and Structure

During 1997, SOF deployed to 144 countries around the world, with an average of 4,760 SOF personnel deployed per week. Currently, SOF consists of more than 46,000 people, active and reserve, who are organized into a variety of sea, air, and land forces. These forces include

wNavy: Sea-Air-Land forces (SEALs), special boat units, and SEAL-delivery teams

wArmy: The U.S. Army Special Forces, the 75th Ranger Regiment, the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, Psychological Operations units, and Civil Affairs units

wAir Force: Special-Operation Squadrons (fixed and rotary wing), special-tactics squadrons, a foreign-internal-defense squadron, and a combat weather squadron

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Discussion, Continued

SOF in Time of War SOF conduct operational and strategic missions that directly or indirectly support the joint force commander's campaign. Fully integrated into the joint campaign plan, SOF help the joint force commander (JFC) seize the initiative, reduce risk, facilitate maneuver, and achieve decisive results. SOF also carry out psychological operations to deceive and demoralize the enemy.

As force multipliers, SOF work with indigenous forces to increase their contribution to the campaign plan and support multinational forces to help integrate them into operations formed around a coalition. In an economy of force role, SOF can work with host nation forces to cover theater flanks that may be uncovered by commitment of conventional forces in response to a major theater war.

Postconflict Operations Many of the SOF capabilities and talents that can be employed in postconflict situations are applicable once fighting has ceased. SOF efforts can be directed toward establishing or reestablishing the infrastructure required for a peaceful and prosperous society. The use of SOF training, coupled with civil affairs and psychological operations expertise, help speed the return to normal conditions, thereby allowing conventional forces to redeploy quickly.

SOF In Peacetime Operations SOF conduct both principal and collateral special operations in peacetime operations. Most peacetime operations take place overseas and involve direct contact with host nation or foreign civilian and military personnel. The operations require extensive coordination with governmental, nongovernmental private volunteer, and multinational organizations. In many cases, the prime considerations in peacetime operations are how to provide information to, influence the behavior of, and organize the activities of the local population.

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Discussion, Continued

Summary

Modern U.S. SOF have evolved in response to the need for specialized forces to conduct operations at the operational and strategical levels. Their organization, equipment, training, personnel selection, and tactics have changed as the threats have changed. In this period of transition following the end of the Cold War, SOF will change along with conventional forces. The direction the forces will take in the future will be based on an understanding of how and why our forces evolved, the basic characteristics and missions of SOF, and the most important lessons from our history.

Required Readings

FM/FMFRP Readings

USSOCOM Pub 1, *Special Operations in Peace and War*, pp. 1-1 through 6-13. Find this reading in the *FM/FMFRP Readings* (8800), pp. 283 to 312. This publication by the United States Special Operations Command contains the fundamental principles that guide special operations forces (SOF). This pub also can serve as a framework for the proper employment of SOF to complement joint doctrine.

Joint Pub Readings

Joint Pub 3-05, *Doctrine For Joint Special Operations*, pp. IV-1 to IV-10. Find this reading in the *Joint Pubs Readings* Vol. III, (8800) pp. 819 to 828. This publication explains planning considerations for force allocation, deployment (including JOPES), and theater strategy. It also includes criteria for evaluating special operation (SO) options, security, and military deception initiatives.

For Further Study

Supplemental Readings

The readings listed are **not** required. They are provided as recommended sources of additional information on lesson topics that may interest you. They will increase your knowledge and augment your understanding of this lesson.

wJoint Pub 1, *Joint Warfare of the U. S. Armed Forces*.

wJoint Pub 2, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*.

wJoint Pub 3-05.5, *Joint Special Operations Targeting and Mission Planning Procedures*.

Issues for Consideration

**Creation of
USSOCOM**

Why was USSOCOM created and what is its role in the organization for national security?

**Difference
Between Special
and Convention-
al Operations**

What are the requirements that distinguish special operations from conventional military operations?

**Importance of
Special
Operations**

Why are special operations forces important?